

A Framework for the Development of Speaking and Listening Skills

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A framework for the development of speaking and listening skills among advanced students of English as a second language is presented herein. It is based upon an English conversation course for third year students of English at Saga Medical School. First, the underlying principles of language teaching and learning, upon which the framework rests, are set forth. Next, an outline of the framework is given. Subsequently, the paper amplifies in detail the manner in which the framework has been translated from something which is merely conceptual into that which is effectual.

We all live in at least two worlds: the world of ideas and the world of actions. To live exclusively in either of the two worlds, however, is to err since the world of ideas alone would be unproductive while the world of actions alone would be mindless. Both are necessary and important.

Over the centuries, a great deal of theorizing, experimentation, debate, and controversy has surrounded the field of foreign language teaching and learning (1), and psycholinguistic research today continues to add to our understanding of this process (2). Indeed, good teaching practice should be based upon a good theoretical foundation (3).

Those who wish to pursue a theoretical consideration of the language teaching and learning process in depth will

have no trouble in finding a plethora of treatises on the subject (4). However, the framework presented in this paper--which deals with the development of speaking and listening skills among advanced students of English as a second language--is based upon the following fundamental principles of language teaching and learning (5), (6).

1. Students should have a clear understanding of the goals of the course.
2. Students should have a clear understanding of how the teacher intends to accomplish those goals.
3. Students should have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.
4. If one accepts the premise that language learning is essentially a habit-forming process, then students must be taught to develop new habits and discouraged from maintaining erroneous ones.
5. There is a distinction to be made--though, admittedly, not absolute--between acquiring the capacity for using a language in real-life situations as opposed to acquiring knowledge about a language.
6. Students should be taught to strive for accuracy with respect to semantics, syntax, phonology, and so on.
7. Lessons should be as interesting and meaningful as possible.
8. Students should be reminded of the progress they have made.

Undoubtedly, the principles listed above, as well as its attendant implications, are far from exhaustive.

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Moreover, they are far from being accepted without controversy and debate. This is, of course, true of any issue. Nevertheless, I should like this paper to be of practical value to those who are involved in the teaching of speaking and listening skills to advanced students of English as a second language. That is, I wish to present for consideration something usable rather than something which is beyond criticism. Indeed, I encourage language teachers to employ their critical faculties in assessing the value and transferability of the framework presented herein.

The framework presented below is based upon an English conversation course for third year students of English at Saga Medical School. The primary goal of the course is to develop students' speaking and listening skills so that they, ideally, may be able to interact freely with native speakers of English; that is, to understand what others wish to communicate and to be able to relate to others what they themselves wish to express.

I. SELECTION AND DISSEMINATION OF ARTICLES

- A. Selection criteria
- B. Time

II. STUDENT PREPARATION

- A. Articles should be read
- B. New words/expressions
- C. Questions

III. IN CLASS

- A. Teacher as facilitator
- B. Discussion
- C. Critique

The teacher's first responsibility is to select an appropriate article which will take into account the following considerations: a) relevance (e.g., How relevant is the article to the particular goals of the course?) b) interest (e.g., How interested in the article will the students be?) c) comprehensibility (e.g., How comprehensible is the language in the article?) d) length (e.g., How long will it take students to read the article?).

After an appropriate article has been selected, copies should be distributed to the students well in advance of the next class session, for example, a week before it is to be discussed. Thereafter, students are responsible for a number of matters. First, students are responsible for reading the article. Second, students should maintain a personal record of new words and expressions encountered in the article along with their definitions. Third, students should record questions which arise from reading the article. In short, students should be prepared to engage in a round-table discussion each week. A standard outline, such as the one presented below, may be helpful to students as they prepare for the session.

I. SUMMARY STATEMENT

A. A brief summary of the article

II. CHARACTERS

A. Who are the principal characters?

III. THE ISSUES

A. What issues are involved?

B. What are its implications?

IV. OPTIONS

A. Course of action

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a. Advantages

b. Disadvantages

V. QUESTIONS

VI. NEW WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

Finally, the classroom is where students are given an opportunity to transform their passive knowledge of the English language into an active ability to use the language for communicative purposes. Certainly a knowledge of the language which students bring with them will be helpful, and yet it must be acknowledged that a passive knowledge does little to develop an active skill. Knowledge is no more a substitute for practice than practice is a substitute for knowledge. Mastery in the understanding of a language is achieved by treating the language as a science (i.e., by acquiring knowledge about something); however, proficiency in the use of a language is achieved by treating the language as an art (i.e., by developing the ability to do something).

With the focus on purposeful and genuine communication, the teacher acts as a facilitator in leading the classroom discussion. He may wish to conduct the sessions in a Socratic fashion wherein each question leads to an answer, which in turn leads to another question, and so on. A commendable by-product of such an approach is the development of critical and generative thinking skills which, notably in Western civilization, has often been asserted to be the supreme aim of education. Incidentally, the Socratic approach need not necessarily be synonymous with the adversary system which involves the use of strict logical reasoning for the purpose of discrediting another's

position (7).

Throughout the session, it is critical that the teacher maintain a record, either written or on tape, of speech errors made by students. By this means, he will, at the end of each session, have an account of the areas of speech which require attention, and upon which he may give a critique of a student's performance. A simple form, such as the one below, may be useful.

NOTES

(DATE)

- I. SEMANTICS:
- II. SYNTAX:
- III. PHONOLOGY:
- IV. INTONATION:
- V. ETC.

After the class, the teacher may then produce in written form a fuller critique of that day's session--speech errors, corrections, grammatical notes, and so on--to be distributed to the students at the next class session. Through this process, the teacher and students will have a running account of the class' progress, and at the end of the term, they will have a record of the ground that has been covered. And certainly, students should be constantly reminded of the goals of the course as well as the manner in which the classroom exercises are designed to facilitate their progress with respect to those goals, for just as one of the principal aids to learning is a sense of purpose, one of its principal rewards is a sense of achievement.

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CONCLUSION

The framework presented herein should certainly be regarded as flexible and, if adopted, it should be modified with respect to a number of considerations. For example, what view of language learning does one maintain? How many students are there in a class? How long does the course run? How much time can a teacher devote to each course?

Unquestionably, we often create wonderful worlds on paper, and yet the earnest application of ideas to reality is what ultimately matters.

NOTES

- (1) L.G. Kelly, 25 Centuries of Language Teaching, Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House (1969).
- (2) See, for example, E.M. Hatch, Psycholinguistics: A Second Language Perspective, Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House (1983).
- (3) R. Wardhaugh, TESOL: Current Problems and Classroom Practices, TESOL Quarterly 3:105-106 (1969).
- (4) U. Bellugi and R. Brown (eds.), The Acquisition of Language, Monograph of the Society of Research in Child Development (1964).
- (5) H.E. Palmer, The Principles of Language-Study, London, Oxford University Press (1974).
- (6) H.H. Stern, Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching, London, Oxford University Press (1984).
- (7) E. de Bono, Teaching Thinking, Middlesex, England, Penguin Books (1984).

聴解・表現技能の伸長の基礎づけ

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佐賀医科大学における上級英語（３年次英会話）受講者間の聴解・表現技能の伸長についての枠組が提示され，先ずその枠組の基礎となる語学教育及び学習の原理に言及し，次にその枠組の概略を述べ，さらにその概念的原理が如何にして実行可能な具体的方法論に変換されるかについて詳述される。